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For Immediate Release

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**Health Department Reports Increase of Bats In or Near Homes**

The Lake County Health Department/Community Health Center is alerting residents, particularly in far northern Lake County, about a recent increase in bats reported in or near homes. Health officials found bats in two homes, one in Zion and one in Antioch. Thus far this summer, no bats have tested positive for rabies in Lake County.

The Health Department is urging anyone who notices a bat acting in an unusual manner, such as flying in daylight or lying on the ground or in your home, to contact the Health Department at (847) 949-9925. If the bat is inside of your house, do not chase it away because it may be needed for rabies testing. Close the doors and keep people away from the room where the bat is located. Trained animal wardens will remove the bat at no cost to the resident or refer the caller to the appropriate jurisdiction. Health officials are urging residents to avoid touching, hitting or destroying bats. When dead bats are submitted to state labs for rabies testing, they need to be in good condition. Heavily damaged bats cannot be tested.

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The Health Department can also refer callers to bat exclusion companies and provide information on methods for excluding bats. Bats can be excluded from living quarters by covering chimneys and vents with half-inch hardware cloth screens, by installing draft guards beneath doors, and by sealing any other possible access routes, especially around screen doors, windows and plumbing. Bats potentially can enter holes as small as 3/4" in diameter or 3/8" by 7/8". They do not chew insulation or otherwise make new holes. Their entries must then be covered or plugged. For small crevices, silicone caulking may help. If a large bat colony must be evicted from a wall or attic, careful observations should be made at dusk to find entry holes (also sometimes recognizable by stains around used holes or crevices or by droppings beneath). The holes should be plugged after the bats emerge to feed (which they do each summer evening).

Parents should make sure children know that they should never touch a bat that is lying on the ground. The bat may not be dead, just ill, and could bite. Pet owners should be on the alert for bats near their homes, because pets that spend time outdoors can easily come into contact with these animals. If a rabid animal bites a pet, the pet may, in turn, bite a person, transmitting rabies to that individual. Rabies can be avoided in pets by vaccination.

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